

Gay Activist Group Plans Pre-Grammy Eminem Protest

GLAAD plans rally outside awards ceremony site to decry rapper's lyrics; British college students ban his music.

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Whether Eminem performs at the Grammys or not, one of the nation's leading gay and lesbian activist organizations plans to protest the rapper's four nominations.

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) announced Tuesday that it will hold a rally outside the Staples Center in Los Angeles at 3 p.m. on February 21 — just before the Grammy Awards telecast there — to protest what it called Eminem's "hate-filled lyrics."

Since the May 2000 release of Eminem's *The Marshall Mathers LP*, GLAAD has issued several statements condemning the rapper's "homophobic" lyrics, and protested the album when its hit "The Real Slim Shady" was honored at September's MTV Video Music Awards.

Eminem is nominated for Album of the Year, Best Rap Solo Performance for "The Real Slim Shady," Best Rap Performance by a Duo or Group on the Dr. Dre song "Forgot About Dre" and Best Rap Album. At press time, Eminem hadn't decided whether he would attend the awards ceremony, which he dissed on "The Real Slim Shady": "You think I give a damn about a Grammy?/ Half of you critics can't even stomach me, let alone stand me."

"Eminem's hate-filled lyrics have not only brought many people together in opposition, they've also raised the issue of corporate responsibility for marketing this kind of product," GLAAD executive director Joan M. Garry said in the group's statement.

Earlier this month, Eminem's management and label said they had no comment on activists' complaints about the rapper's lyrics. *The Marshall Mathers LP* includes the song "Criminal," which features the lyrics "My words are like a dagger with a jagged edge/ That'll stab you in the head/ Whether you're a fag or a lez."

Eminem has said in interviews and in songs such as "Stan" that his lyrics shouldn't be taken literally.

GLAAD says that other activist organizations, including the National Organization for Women and the Matthew Shepard Foundation, will join them at the protest.

In related news, students at Sheffield University in London, England, have banned Eminem songs and T-shirts, according to *Reuters*. The college radio station and disco will not play the rapper's music, and the student newspaper can't print reviews of Eminem's albums or concerts.

"There was clear evidence of a flagrant breach of our policy toward gays, " the news service quoted Sheffield student union board member Neil Foster as saying.

But Sheffield's radio station's head of music had a different take.

"We argued till we were blue in the face that we're all over 18 and unlikely to have our opinions about homosexuality influenced by the lyrics of a singer," Dan Morfitt told the news service.

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